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ABSTRACT

The use of groups in both the workplace and schools has been increasing. In the workplace, groups reflective of a growing trend toward worker participation in management have been variously referred to as self-managing work teams, self-directed work groups, quality circles, autonomous work groups, and cross-functional teams. Schools have used many group approaches, including cooperative learning, collaborative learning, peer tutoring, and small group work, since the early 20th century. All these forms of cooperative learning have been associated with increased proficiency, higher-quality thinking, higher self-esteem, enhanced interethnic relations, and greater acceptance of disabled students. As the role of these and other groups in the workplace continues to increase, it is increasingly important that schools equip students with the higher form of literacy needed to participate in groups at work. Among the skills involved in this new literacy are exercising initiative, peer training, group problem-solving, and interpersonal communication. Educators can use the business sector as a source of ideas for improving education regarding these and similar skills. Teachers can, for example, serve as managers who help empower their students to adjust to new roles and learn to collaborate with others and think in long rather than short terms. (Contains 44 references.) (MN)

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A COMPARISON OF WORKPLACE GROUPS WITH GROUPS IN EDUCATION

ED 369 922

Paper presented at the 1994 annual conference of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Baltimore

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ABSTRACT

A trend toward the use of groups can be seen both at the workplace and in schools. The growing presence of groups at work provides one motivation for groups at school, because students now need to acquire a higher form of literacy to participate in groups at work. Involved in this broader literacy are such skills as exercising initiative, peer-training, group problem solving, and interpersonal communication. Such literacy will be especially difficult for second language learners to achieve. The authors discuss the nature of this trend toward groups and the reasons for it.

Next, groups at the two sites are compared in areas such as the changing roles of managers/teachers and employees/students and the degree of commonality of interests between managers/teachers and employees/students. The authors conclude that the use of groups in education is valuable for helping students acquire the skills and attitudes of cooperation and complex thinking. Such preparation will serve students well regardless of what they encounter in their careers and beyond. Additionally, the content of education must also be considered in preparing students for the situations they may experience with employers and others.

> Firms around the world are facing an ever-increasing array of employee-related problems, such as decreasing productivity, faltering product quality, persistent absenteeism, work dissatisfaction and high levels of turnover. . . . For organizations, the need to respond effectively to these problems is of paramount importance as the ability to compete in the global marketplace hangs in the balance. One concept which is showing particular promise as a comprehensive solution to those problems is that of self-managing work teams (Salem & Banner, 1992: 3).

Pronouncements such as this are increasingly heard as businesses turn to workplace groups as a means of improving profitability. With a few changes, the same pronouncement would sound much like what we hear today in educational circles.

> Schools around the world are facing an ever-increasing array of student-related problems, such as decreasing achievement, faltering quality of student thinking and behaviour, persistent absenteeism, dissatisfaction with

> school, and high levels of dropping out from and turning off to education. . . . For countries, the need to respond effectively to these problems is of paramount importance as the ability to compete in the global marketplace hangs in the balance. One concept which is showing particular promise as a comprehensive solution to those problems is that of cooperative learning groups.

Sound familiar? The purpose of this article is to explore some of the similarities and differences between groups of students and groups of employees. It is hoped that such an exploration will shed light on the use of groups in education, the relevance of looking toward the workplace for guidance as to how to structure learning, and the ways in which education, particularly second language (L2) education, can prepare students for their futures. Our conclusion is that group work can play an important role in education, but that, beyond methodology, wider curricular considerations must be taken into account. Outside the scope of this article is consideration of the fact that schools, too, are workplaces for custodians, canteen workers, teachers, administrators, and others.

Workplace Groups

At the workplace, several different names are used to describe groups: self-managing work teams, self-directed work groups, quality circles, autonomous work groups, cross-functional teams. They form part of a larger trend toward worker participation in management (Strauss, 1982). In addition to groups, other forms of worker participation include works councils, producer cooperatives, worker directors of companies, and stock ownership plans.

Workplace groups represent a shift from the trend that dominated most of the 20th century. This was a trend toward greater specialization of tasks and tighter control of workers, which was pioneered by Frederick Taylor, who studied the time in took individual workers to perform each minute aspect of their jobs, and Henry Ford, an early leader in the use of assembly line production.

Giselle Mawer (1991) has done research into the changing

needs of ESL students entering the Australian workforce. She defines the principles of this former trend as including:

1) a strict hierarchical organisational structure
2) narrowly defined jobs
3) a narrow range of skills required to perform each job
4) the standardisation of methods by precise specification of every task
5) workers cut off from decision-making
6) the discouragement of social interaction among workers
7) authoritarian relations within the hierarchy
8) the strict supervision of workers.

While workplace groups have achieved prominence only recently, Dyer (1977) traces them to the famous Hawthorne studies of the 1920s and 30s. From these studies, came the well-known Hawthorne effect in research methodology, i.e., that just the knowledge that they are taking part in a study changes people's behaviour. Researchers were investigating the productivity of workers at a factory which made telephone equipment. Regardless of how their working conditions and incentives were varied, employees in the experimental group consistently had greater output.

Central to our thesis here, the researchers finally concluded that this increased productivity was due to other factors. One was the feeling of cohesion, common identity, and mutual support which was built up in the experimental group. Another factor was the special attention they received from their supervisors. A third factor leading to increased output was that the experimental group was consulted before any change in the research program. Thus, they developed a sense of participation in shaping their work and a level of autonomy in relation to the researchers and company management. Dyer suggests that these attributes of the Hawthorne group form a model for workplace groups.

While we are not aware of any recent control group experiments that have looked at the effects of workplace groups, case studies and survey research suggest that use of such groups is associated with increases in productivity, product quality, cost-efficiency, job satisfaction, and employee morale and motivation (Dumaine, 1990; Montebello &

Buzzotta, 1993, Wellins, Byham, & Wilson, 1991). Nevertheless, although not denying the trend toward groups, studies of U.S. companies (e.g., National Center of Education and the Economy, 1990) report that groups are still the exception.

Groups in Education

In schools, approaches which use groups include cooperative learning, collaborative learning, peer tutoring, and small group work. Such efforts go back at least to the project approach of John Dewey (1966) in the early 20th century. Much research, although relatively little of it in L2, has been conducted on such approaches. In general, they have been associated with increased proficiency, more higher quality thinking, greater liking for school, fellow students, and teachers, higher self-esteem, enhanced interethnic relations, and more acceptance of handicapped students (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Slavin, 1990). (See McGroarty, 1989 and Olsen & Kagan, 1992 for reviews of L2 research.)

For our purposes, we will use the term cooperative learning for all these approaches. We are aware of no estimates of the use of cooperative learning in schools, generally, or in L2 instruction, specifically, but the increasing prominence of cooperative learning and other group methods in literature for educators and in materials for students suggests it is on the rise.

Cooperative learning is congruent with other changes taking place in education. Inspired by cognitive and humanistic psychology, as well as generative and functional linguistics, many educationists see learning not as primarily a process of teachers transferring knowledge to students, but of students constructing knowledge by relating what they already know to new learning. The student, not the teacher, is key to the enterprise of learning. Rote learning is being deemphasized and replaced by approaches which encourage thinking and creativity. Cooperative learning fits well into this learner-centred philosophy.

Why the Trend Toward Groups

While groups at work and school have been around for many years, they have attracted increased attention recently (Brauchle & Wright, 1993; Montebello & Buzzotta, 1993; Salem & Banner, 1992). One reason for this lies in the changes wrought by the information age and the ease of multinational trade. Companies need the knowledge and imagination of all their employees, not just that of a top managers and other elite employees. Groups provide fertile grounds for generating the creative thinking and new ideas that companies seek (Hilt, 1992; Yeo, 1993).

This change in global corporate thinking is emphatically illustrated in the remarks of Konosuke Matsushita, Executive Director of Japanese industrial giant Matsushita Electric:

> We are going to win and the industrial West is going to lose out: there's nothing much you can do about it, because the reasons for failure are within yourself ... for you the essence of management is getting the ideas out of the heads of the bosses into the hand of labor. ... for us, the core of management is precisely the act of mobilizing and pulling together the intellectual resources of all employees ... only by drawing on the combined brainpower of all its employees can a firm face up to the turbulence and constraints of today's environment (cited in Tjosvold & Tjosvold, 1991:169).

Particularly in developed, high-wage countries, information age technology and global trade have resulted in the loss of unskilled jobs. Today, companies need workers at all levels to be able to think. Employees with strong backs and weak minds are becoming less valuable. Futurist Alvin Toffler (1990) says that the day is no more in which the workplace is separated into "heads" and "hands."

Among the skills and attitudes needed by workers of the information age are:

1) initiative
2) cooperation and the capacity to work in groups
3) communication and reasoning

4) peer-training
5) obtaining and using information and planning
6) problem solving and decision-making
7) capacity to learn new knowledge (Mawer, 1991:5)

Another force which may be pushing both employers and schools toward more participatory structures are changes in the zeitgeist, the spirit of the times. People at the middle and lower ends of hierarchies are more educated and increasingly demanding rights. For example, people want to know more about the forces shaping their lives; they are no longer content, if they ever were, with being kept in the dark. They want to know what is in the food they eat, why their doctor prescribed a certain medicine, why the company they work for made a particular managerial decision, and why the teacher is asking them to do a given lesson.

Another one of the rights people are demanding is the right to derive satisfaction from one's job. Beyond their pay checks, people want satisfaction from knowing that their work is valuable, that they are learning and growing, and that they have some control over what happens at the workplace. Similarly, many students feel their school work is meaningless and that they are powerless. They are no longer satisfied, if they ever were, to wait for some long-in-the-future reward for doing boring, rote school assignments. Instead, they seek activities which are significant and in which they have some control.

Business as a Source of Ideas for Education

The world of work is being increasingly looked to for ideas about how to improve many aspects of education. For example, in the U.S., the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, while governor of the state of South Carolina, called for business to have a major role in school reform, stating that "[educators] must begin to embrace business concepts [such as] productivity, efficiency, cost benefits, and incentive pay programs" (quoted in Noble, 1993).

Advocates of cooperative learning often use as an argument that studying together in the classroom prepares students for working together with colleagues in their future

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jobs (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1990; Kagan, 1992). They argue that changes in the workplace demand changes in instruction so that students will be prepared to be productive and successful.

Two quotes from Spencer Kagan, a leading authority on cooperative learning, illustrate the link between groups at school and those at work.

> In a high-technology economy, the norm in the workplace is interaction. Increasingly, the workplace consists of interdependent teams working on complex problems which no individual alone can solve (Kagan, 1992, ch. 2:1).

> It was once true that, with a fixed set of skills and an individualistic orientation, many of yesterday's students could function very well. ... That world is gone. ... Increasingly, economic success -- at both the individual and company levels -- will come by transforming competitive task and reward structures into cooperative structures. ... Schools must now prepare students for a social and economic world which is changing so fast that it is relatively unpredictable. In the rapidly changing, high-technology, management and information oriented economy of the future, there will be a premium placed on individuals with a variety of social skills (Kagan, 1992, ch. 2:5).

Two scholars who bridge the gap between groups in the workplace and those at school are Dean Tjosvold and David W. Johnson. Tjosvold is a leading advocate of workplace groups (e.g., Tjosvold, 1986). He studied under Johnson, a well-known researcher and trainer in cooperative learning. They have collaborated on at least one book (Tjosvold & Johnson, 1983), as well as other projects.

Both Tjosvold and Johnson trace their roots to social psychologist Morton Deutsch, who, following the ideas of gestalt psychologist Kurt Lewin, studied the interdependence which existed between people in groups. Deutsch classified such interdependence into three types: positive, negative, and null. Positive interdependence exists when what helps one group members helps all, and what hurts one member hurts all. Conversely, negative interdependence is the situation when

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what helps one group member hinders the rest and what hurts one helps the rest. No interdependence exists when what happens to one group member has no effect on the others. (See Slavin, 1990 for other perspectives on the theoretical roots of cooperative learning.)

Of course, groups at each of the two sites vary among each other in many ways, such as the amount of authority they possess, their size, the length of time they exist, the relation of the teacher or manager to the group, the means by which group members are chosen, the training members receive as to how to work together, the kind and quantity of rewards they receive, and the amount and type of variety which exists among group members.

Candlin (1993) suggests that the changing demands of workplace literacy should substantially impact the ESL curriculum in terms of content, design, process, and outcome. Unfortunately, few ESL coursebooks exist to help prepare learners for the contemporary workplace. One exception in the series English at Work (Byrnes & Candlin, 1991), designed for adult learners. The series includes units entitled "Working Together (Participative Management), Communicating Change, Resolving Conflict at Work, and Solving Problems at Work (Total Quality Management)." The authors cite another coursebook, ESL for Action (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1986), as an inspiration for their work.

The rest of this paper compares groups at work and school on a number of factors, focusing mostly on similarities. Here, we will be considering the prototypical workplace and school. The former is privately owned, while the latter is publicly run and financed mostly or completely by the government.

Roles of Managers/Teachers

In many ways, managers and teachers have common roles. This is illustrated by the fact that preservice teachers take courses in classroom management, and a frequent concern of inservice teachers is how to control their students. Both managers and teachers have to learn new roles when groups are used. Manz, Keating, and Donnellon (1990) studied the transition process from the standard hierarchical arrangement

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to the use of self-managed teams among blue collar workers at a warehouse facility in the U.S. They focused on the changing roles of the managers.

Their study may be of particular interest to educationists because the average age of the employees on the teams was only 19. Also, as in many schools, the workforce was multiethnic. This had been the source of some tensions. Other problems were that absenteeism was about 10 per cent, employee turnover was 250 per cent, productivity was low, and error rates were high. These factors were important in motivating the company to take the risk of trying self-managing work teams.

The researchers found that the managers initially felt threatened and resentful toward the change to self-managing teams for three reasons. One, they felt the change would be seen as due to their past shortcomings. Two, the managers saw the change as coming from the outside consultant who would get the credit should it succeed. Three, they believe the new plan would not work, in part because their subordinates were too immature and irresponsible to handle self-management. These objections mirror some of those we have heard from teachers who are hesitant to use cooperative learning. They defend the traditional, teacher-fronted way of teaching, especially for L2 learners. They view the change as imposed from outside and assert that cooperative learning will not succeed because students will not know how to make good use of their new freedom and will waste valuable learning time by, for example, speaking in the L1.

However, as the new system was implemented, Manz et al. found that managers' views began to change. They saw that their young subordinates could handle the higher level of responsibility. The managers recognized that this also was a major innovation for the workers who had never experienced such a flattened hierarchy before and, therefore, would need time to adjust. Managers realized that their role had to change from an autocratic style, with heavy use of punishments in an attempt to tightly control workers, to a facilitative style, which sought to support the teams by asking questions instead of giving answers, by encouraging teams to overcome their own problems without punishing them for mistakes, and by fostering the skills needed to interact effectively in groups.

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Manz et al. found that this change in management style entailed not just changing a few behaviours, but a major philosophical transformation. This transformation was accompanied by changes in their conception of workplace relations, the language managers used with subordinates, and their repertoire of skills for managing. Palincsar, Stevens, & Gavelek (1988), Rich (1990), and Thornbury (1991) also cited philosophical issues as the key obstacle in encouraging teachers to adapt learner-centred approaches, such as cooperative learning methods. Hours of training in actual techniques are worthless if collaboration among students runs counter to teachers' views of education.

Setting aside time for managers to meet regularly to discuss their new roles was another important element in the change process reported by Manz et al. In training meetings, managers role-played situations, learning to use responses such as, "I'm not here to solve the problem. I'm here to help you solve the problem" (p. 24).

Similarly, many experts on cooperative learning stress the importance of collaboration among teachers, as they move to more facilitating, less controlling roles in the classroom (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1990; Kagan, 1992). Such collaboration not only helps teachers/managers learn and come to believe in their new roles, it also provides an important model for students/employees. By working together among themselves, teachers/managers show through their actions that they really value collaboration.

One reason that managers/teachers need this peer support is that their new ways may be criticized by others. In using groups, thus giving some power to their subordinates, they may be seen as not doing their job, as being weak. For example, teachers may worry about what administrators, parents, or colleagues will think if they are observed out of their normal place and role, in front of the classroom lecturing the students.

However, Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1991) point out that empowering employees/students does not mean depowering managers/teachers. They are sharing, not abdicating, power. Power is not a zero-sum game. When managers/teachers give up power and employees/students gain it, managers/teachers can also gain. Power is seen as expandable, both sides can become

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more powerful through working together. Shared power becomes fortified and more effective by being shared. In what can be equally applied to students, Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1991) state:

> Employees don't want dominance, but they do want leadership, direction, and vision from the top. . . . Leadership is a relationship that goes two ways: they influence you and you influence them. It is only together that you and they can be powerful (p. 15).

An important question hinted at in the above quote is: In using groups are managers/teachers giving power to employees/students or merely recognizing and seeking to direct the power which they already possess (Riseborough, 1985)? For example, employees can strike, slow or spoil production, and in multiple other ways exert the power they control as indispensable elements in the work process. Similarly, students are what schools are all about. If they do not learn, the school is a failure. Teachers can lecture, give assignments, threaten and cajole all they want, but unless students meaningfully engage in the learning process, there is no point in opening the doors, except for babysitting purposes.

Helping Students/Employees Adjust to New Roles

Students and workers often lack the skills and attitudes necessary to work together well. They need to adjust to their new roles just as do managers. Thus, many experts on groups at school and at the workplace advocate that time be spent to learn this new role.

For example, Brauchle and Wright (1993) describe a 10-step procedure which they used to train teams of production workers at a General Electric facility. Included in their training procedure are ideas which will sound familiar to educationists, such as providing clear models, connecting the training to workers real-world experiences, allowing workers to set their own goals, and teaching about effective group processes.

A case study of an office of more than 100 unionized

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telephone operators in the U.S. (Taylor, Friedman, & Couture, 1987) illustrates how employees can, with training, take responsibility for much of what used to be management roles. The study's authors, who include the then union president, describe how such telephone offices, staffed mostly by women, had traditionally been run much like classrooms. Operators were required to raise their hands to use the restroom. In order to reduce talking, friends were not allowed to sit next to one another. Hats were banned. Supervisors listened in on operators without their knowledge.

The company decided to try a very different approach at a new office. The facility was to be run by only one manager who defined her role as "resource person and mentor" (p. 30). Six operators, including a union representative, were chosen by management to serve with her on a committee charged with running day-to-day operations. This committee received five days of training to prepare for their task and to write a statement of purpose. Later, the original operators were rotated off the committee and others had a chance.

The office was staffed by having operators from existing facilities bid to join the new, untraditional office. Such an approach might be likened to the school-within-a-school concept, in which different segments of a school take on unique identities based on content emphasis or style of instruction. Many more operators applied than were needed, and the committee was able to choose those they believed would be best suited to the new style operation. Training was carried out by the employees.

Taylor, et al. believe the new operation was a success, reporting that absenteeism and grievances fell, service quality and productivity increased, and employee moral rose. One explanation they give for these results is that being part of the decision making process made the work more interesting and increased employees' ownership of decisions. They quote one operator as saying, "I feel like my ideas count; I feel like I'm part of something" (p. 37).

Nevertheless, Taylor et al. state that the new arrangement was not without its difficulties. For example, they believe most of the employees never developed the necessary skills to function effectively on the management committee. Perhaps related to this was the fact that other

employees resented the committee's authority but could not file grievances against fellow union members.

Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind (1991) are among the many educationists who encourage teachers to spend class time helping students develop such collaborative skills as encouraging others to participate, handling disagreement productively, and reflecting on their group process. Collaborative skills and attitudes not only help make cooperative learning activities more effective, but they also prepare students for collaboration outside the classroom. Further, Jacobs and Robinson (1992) argue that cooperative learning activities provide L2 students with opportunities to learn the language of collaboration.

Employees/students are often unaccustomed to the increased freedom that groupwork provides and may, at least initially, resist assuming more control and doing more thinking (Smith & Johnson, 1993; Thavenius, 1990). For instance, many students have become accustomed to cognitively undemanding activities, such as retrieving information directly from texts at their teachers' orders. When they are encouraged to do more complex thinking, such as applying and evaluating information or teaching it to others, students may lack confidence. Thus, most advocates of cooperative groups believe that time and practice are necessary if these adjustments are to be made.

Cooperation as Central to Human Endeavour

While we hear much the virtues of competition and the need to prepare students for the rat race of life, many educationists and corporate management specialists see learning, work, and life in general as primarily cooperative. They stress that the bulk of human endeavour consists of cooperative interactions, not competitive or individualistic ones. Even Adam Smith, an early theorist of capitalism, espoused cooperation within enterprises, reserving competition for interorganizational relations.

There has long been the business ideal of the great man from humble origins who builds the huge corporation employing thousands of people who, but for his genius and hard work, would be jobless. Current U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert

Reich, in a 1987 Harvard Business Review article entitled "Team as Hero," debunks this myth stating instead that group effort and ingenuity are the keys to success.

Indeed, competitiveness may actually impede success. In a series of studies cited in Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1991), successful Ph.D. scientists, businessmen, airline pilots, and students were found to be low on competitiveness. Further, Tjosvold and Tjosvold cite studies in which managers who developed cooperative relationships with their employees, rather than competitive or independent relationships, inspired greater commitment and were judged to be more competent.

Short-term Thinking as an Impediment

Groups at work and at school often have trouble getting off the ground because time pressures provide little space for managers/teachers and employees/students to make the necessary adjustments to their new roles. Companies and stockholders, as well as school administrations and governments, want to see quick, measurable results in terms of high profits and increased productivity at work and completed coursebooks and high standardized test scores at school.

Such pressures lead to a short-term, crisis management orientation which works against spending the time to learn and to cooperation, a change designed to bring long-term benefits. For example, some teachers feel that they can cover more material with a lecture, chalk and talk, method than via more learner-centred approaches, such as cooperative learning. They see time spent getting accustomed to and using groupwork as time lost from learning.

Because of such an attitude, even when groups are used, it may be done in an incomplete way, leading to failure and negative attitudes toward further use of groups. Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1991) believe that a longer view produces the best results, arguing that time spent to train managers and employees in how groups function will bring long-term dividends. They ask, "If you don't have time to do it right the first time, when will you find time to do it over?" (p. 29) Similarly, some advocates of cooperative learning attribute reports of problems with groups to lack of planning and preparation (Johnson & Johnson, 1993).

Part of the unwillingness to invest in groups stems from a view that sees relationships among people as nice, but not necessary. However, both at work and at school, other people are often the most powerful motivators. Slavin (1990) concludes that one of the main reasons for the success of cooperative learning is that when students are in positively interdependent groups, instead of the teacher being the only one reinforcing learning, students are now also receiving positive reinforcement from their peers. Long and Porter (1985) cite research suggesting a motivating effect for group activities in L2 instruction.

In contrast to a short-term focus on quantity and outcomes, proponents of groups emphasize process and quality. At work, such improved processes are thought to result in a better quality product or service and in greater job satisfaction. At school, a process approach is hypothesized to create more intrinsic motivation and deeper understanding. At the same time that groups improve processes and quality, they are also believed to promote increased profits at work and learning at school, i.e. quantity and outcome.

Seeing More of the Big Picture

Along the lines of gaining a deeper understanding, groups are a way of helping employees/students gain more control over their situations, and with this control can come increased knowledge of how things work on the job and at school. In companies where groups are used, workers are often told about how their jobs contributes to the overall product or service that the company creates.

Another way of letting employees in on the big picture is by telling them about the financial processes of the corporation. For example, Chaparral Steel, one of the world's most productive steel companies, posts their financial statements every month as an incentive for workers who participate in the company's profit sharing plan (Dumaine, 1990).

If we equate money for workers with learning for students, admittedly an imperfect analogy, perhaps one school equivalent of telling workers about how the production process works is the move recently in education to help students learn

more about the learning process via such means as the teaching of learning strategies (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Wenden, 1991). The worker and the student now can see part of the bigger picture.

Does Positive Interdependence Apply at Both Sites?

Although we have highlighted the similarities between groups at the workplace and at school, clearly, there are differences in the relationship between companies and their employees, on one hand, and schools and students, on the other. For example, the average worker is an adult, while the average student in a minor. However, perhaps the biggest difference between work and school resides in the relation between people at the upper and lower ends of the hierarchies at work and school.

Most supporters of workplace groups argue that while there is not complete equivalence of interests between management and employees, their common interests predominate, especially when groups and other appropriate management policies are used. Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1991:92) put it this way, "Management and labor have the common goal to create a quality relationship that helps them work together to pursue their joint interests." Others disagree. For instance, Hoerr (1989) found that some auto workers felt antagonistic toward their company and saw groups as just a company ploy to get them to work harder.

Companies and schools have different responsibilities to those at the less powerful side of the hierarchy. Public schools must accept all students regardless of their mental, physical, or behavioral characteristics, and although students can be removed from specific classes, the school system has the responsibility of providing a good education for all students until they reach a given age.

Employers have no such responsibilities. First of all, they hire only those people who they believe will be useful. Then, once someone is hired, they can be terminated, subject to certain constraints, should they not perform up to expectations. Entire enterprises can be closed down by parent companies, or businesses can be moved, even those that are doing well, all for the sake of company profits. For example, the telephone facility, discussed above, with operators on the

management committee was closed down after less than three years. Even in Japan, where some companies have a reputation for providing life-long jobs, people are being discharged in tough economic times. School systems can not leave students in this way.

Another difference in the relationship between managers and employees, on one hand, and teachers and students, the other, is that while employers might wish to limit employees' income even if groups cause overall profits to expand, schools would seem to have no interest in limiting the amount students learn. Indeed, it reflects well on schools and teachers when their students learn a lot or otherwise succeed.

All this is not to argue that no identity of interest exists between workers and management. Clearly, there are areas where, at least in the short term, what helps one side also helps the other, and what hurts one hurts the other. For example, as mentioned above, the literature on workplace groups suggests that groups increase workers' job satisfaction at the same time that they increase the quantity and quality of their work.

However, in schools, the issue of whether the relationship is one of positive or negative interdependence is not so clear either. One problematic area in the relationship between teachers and students is the What, not the How Much, of student learning. Social critics (e.g., Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985) charge that schools try to mould students to adopt the thinking and ways of the dominant culture.

This concern is particularly crucial for students from ethnic groups and social classes that hold less powerful positions in society. For example, Tollefson (1989) criticized the vocational ESL training of Indochinese refugees bound for the U.S., claiming that they were being channelled toward submissive roles in unskilled jobs. Students sometimes resist such moulding, e.g., Willis (1977) reported on working class students' resistance to efforts at socialization into the dominant culture.

Thus, the question arises in schools, just as in business: Are groups a means of empowering those at the lower end of the hierarchy, or are they merely a more efficient means for the powerful to achieve their ends? To answer this question for schools, educationists will need to examine their

own goals and practices. How much of our formal power do we want to give students? Does the content of the classroom relate to students' needs (Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind, 1991)?

Conclusions

There are many similarities between groups at work and at school. In both contexts, people on both sides of the power hierarchies need to take on new roles and learn new skills and attitudes, as power is somewhat more evenly shared. Students/employees gain more control and a greater understanding of the learning/work processes. A more long-term, process-oriented, cooperative perspective is adopted. Given these similarities, a sharing of insights from groups at work and school appear mutually informative and inspiring.

Further, regardless of one's view of the degree to which companies and workers share common interests and whether or not the workplace has actually changed, the curriculum involved in preparing students to participate in workplace groups is worthwhile. Skills in problem-solving, decision-making, reasoning, interpersonal communication, peer-teaching, and cooperative conflict will serve students well whether they decide that they are positively or negatively interdependent with their future employers and may increase their ability to influence the relationship. Indeed, such skills will help them judge for themselves which relationship exists.

Overall, the ability and the proclivity to collaborate with others are essential to success in school, work, and in other areas of life. Sadly, these collaborative attributes seem sorely lacking not only among students but in the population generally. Cooperative learning, in addition to increasing achievement, is thus to be recommended for its potential contribution to better schools and societies generally. However, as educationists, we need to examine group learning in the context of the overall curriculum to see if it really is leading to better education for our students.

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